



**Chambre de commerce
du Montréal métropolitain**
Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal

April 7, 2004

Mr. Claude Dauphin
Chairman, Société de transport de Montréal, and
Member of the City of Montreal's Executive Committee
Société de Transport de Montréal
800 de la Gauchetière Street West, P.O. Box 2000
Montreal, Quebec H5A 1J6

Dear Sir:

The Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal is concerned by recent media reports that, among other possibilities, the Société de Transport de Montréal (STM) is considering the establishment of a downtown area car toll to help balance its books.

On behalf of its some 7,000 members, the Board of Trade wishes first to express its objection to any new STM financing measure that could reduce the appeal of the downtown core and thus its business and commercial traffic. We believe that while it is desirable to encourage the use of public transit for those heading downtown, we must avoid implementing measures that would encourage those in cars to go elsewhere. We believe that, in this respect, the commercial vitality of the downtown core is particularly vulnerable. This area is key to the economic development of the metropolis, and it is essential that we remain consistent in our actions so as not to weaken one of our most valuable assets.

The Board of Trade shares the interest of Montrealers in an efficient public transit network and constantly promotes its development. We are also fully aware of the significant economic benefits to the Montreal economy of the expanded use of mass transit. Given the major investments required to renew and improve public transit infrastructures, the Board of Trade recognizes the need to invest more heavily in the STM network. That said, the Board of Trade firmly believes that these investments must be made without increasing the existing burden on taxpayers in the metropolitan Montreal area.

Since 1992, the provincial government has considerably reduced its contributions to the operation of Montreal's public transit system. This reduction in its financial participation has largely been offset by the institution of \$30 license fees, which are, in reality, an additional direct contribution from metropolitan area taxpayers. Through gas taxes, license fees, municipal taxes, and user fees, they assume more than 80 percent of the cost of public transit in Greater Montreal. A toll for drivers entering downtown would only increase this already high percentage.

The Board of Trade believes it is up to higher levels of government to find public transit funding solutions that can be implemented within the existing tax base. In our opinion, this

search for solutions is in line with the overall need for cities to find new, increased, diversified, and predictable sources of revenue.

As a responsible, contributory player, the Board of Trade would like to assure you of its cooperation in continuing to make the relevant authorities at other levels of government aware of the need to preserve and improve these infrastructures, which contribute greatly to the economic competitiveness of Montreal as well as its exceptional environment and quality of life.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Labonté', written in a cursive style.

Benoit Labonté
President

c.c. Gérald Tremblay, mayor of Montreal